Going Beyond Development: Faculty Professional Learning—An Academic Senate Obligation to Promote Equity-Minded Practices that Improve Instruction and Student Success

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A focus on faculty professional learning, given the challenges that California community colleges and students face, must remain a high priority and continue to evolve. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) has long been an advocate for the development of robust professional development policies as part of senate purview under Title 5 §53200, colloquially referred to as the 10+1. Indeed, as student populations within the California community colleges become more diverse, colleges seek to improve student success and close the opportunity gap for marginalized communities. The ASCCC has passed numerous resolutions in support of intentional learning opportunities to address diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism throughout the curriculum and college cultures. Such intentional learning must be a significant component of faculty professional learning and development.

The goal and purpose of this paper is to examine the importance of faculty professional learning that is necessary to improve student success as well as the role local academic senates can play in such efforts. The paper will examine the issues from both a philosophical and practical point of view.

BACKGROUND

Faculty professional learning activities have always been an integral component of the continuing education of community college faculty. However, the necessary emphasis and components of professional development have progressed significantly over the years. Consistent with the view at the time, the 2000 ASCCC paper *Faculty Development: A Senate Issue* described the importance of professional development for "the continuing expertise and professional advancement of faculty members" and expressed the need for funding and collegial consultation. While those issues continue to be important today, profound changes to the role of faculty, the make-up of the student body, and shifts in teaching and learning have led to an expansion of faculty roles to keep

up with new directions in teaching and research (Sorcinelli 2007). The equity-driven focus on learner-centered teaching and the obligation of colleges to close gaps offer opportunities for growth. Additionally, reporting obligations have changed; student learning outcomes, evaluation of prior learning, accelerated learning, and myriad other shifts to the college landscape require a solid faculty development plan at every college.

Meanwhile, transformational understanding of professional development itself has resulted in a body of research pointing to the need to reconceptualize it for many professions, including education. Webster-Wright (2009) documents the consensus among educational researchers that the notion of professional development (PD) implies episodic training disengaged from daily practice; this reimagining of PD sees professional educational growth as "continuing, active, social, and related to practice" (p.703), better termed authentic professional learning. Professional learning (PL) theory is situated in the Vygotskian view that "Learning is essentially a sociocultural activity" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 707) that requires participation in communities of practice; as such, PL moves away from the idea of training and towards that of continual integration of new learning into the practices wrought by theoretical study. Rather than focusing on the professional as "deficient and in need of developing and directing" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 712), PL actively constructs the learning by infusing it into the learner's authentic practice. Therefore, this paper shall generally refer to what had traditionally been called professional development as professional learning.

Signed into law in 1988, Assembly Bill 1725 (Vasconcellos) designated funding to support professional learning for faculty, student service staff, support staff, and administrators. The Title 5 implementation language for AB 1725 in §53200 provided for academic senates to "make recommendations to the administration of a college and to the governing board of a district with respect to academic and professional matters," thus localizing professional development as a responsibility of academic senates, charging them with creating a learning environment that would improve the development, growth, and success of each student. Title 5 §53200 further clarifies the requirements for consultation with academic senates and the scope of academic senate responsibilities and roles.

The California Community Colleges system allows each college or district to convert up to fifteen instructional days in each academic year into non-instructional days "for employees to conduct staff, student, and instructional improvement activities" (Title 5, §55720). This option is formally titled the Flexible Calendar Program, and therefore the non-instructional days are commonly referred to as Flex days. Faculty participation in lieu of instruction on Flex days must be tracked and reported to the Chancellor's Office, but, within set guidelines, each institution has freedom to determine the extent and parameters of its faculty's Flex obligation.

The ASCCC and local academic senates, in collaboration with system partners including the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), offer an array of professional learning activities in such areas as the following:

- Distance Education
- The Online Education Initiative
- Open Educational Resources
- The Zero Textbook Cost Degree Program
- Effective teaching strategies for diverse student populations
- Support for students with disabilities, including accessibility needs
- Guided Pathways frameworks

Faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to seek continuous improvement in workplace learning by combining continuous education and research to develop a holistic approach to teaching and learning that allows for engagement in self-directed learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). Centering on learning, especially focused on improving minoritized student population success and completion, can improve outcomes for all students. Learning occurs in all aspects of professional and lived experiences, so the challenge is how to capture learning that will improve professional skills and knowledge (Webster-Wright, 2009).

COMPONENTS AND DELIVERY OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Broadly speaking, professional learning [development] in the educational context can be defined as "a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness" (Professional Development, 2013). The state of California, in Education Code §87153, has specified that professional development encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at staff, student, and instructional improvement, including the following:

- improvement of teaching
- maintenance of current academic and technical knowledge and skills
- in-service training for vocational education and employment preparation programs
- retraining to meet changing institutional needs
- intersegmental exchange programs
- development of innovations in instructional and administrative techniques and program effectiveness
- computer and technological proficiency programs
- courses and training implementing affirmative action and upward mobility programs
- other activities determined to be related to educational and professional development pursuant to criteria established by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, including, but not necessarily limited to, programs designed to develop self-esteem

The Covid-19 pandemic forced colleges to expand the availability of more flexible delivery of instruction and support services than was previously offered. This increased flexibility should be institutionalized and applied throughout college structures, including professional learning. While advantages exist for some types of professional learning to take place in person, including conferences, institutes, and workshops, equal consideration should be given to alternate

methods of delivery, including synchronous online delivery such as webinars and online conferences as well as asynchronous delivery such as self-paced courses and other innovative approaches. While colleges that approve in-person professional learning opportunities frequently allow time for travel and provide accommodation for faculty to be absent from their regularly scheduled duties to participate in the learning experience, such accommodation is often not made for synchronous online delivery of professional learning, including webinars and online conferences, forcing faculty to try to squeeze in only a few sessions between their regularly scheduled duties and not allowing for an immersive experience. This disparity suggests that in-person learning is more valued than online delivery. Many organizations have expanded their online offerings during the Covid-19 pandemic, and some of these expanded opportunities may become permanent. However, if faculty are forced to attend such conferences in a piecemeal fashion, the overall learning experience is diminished compared to an in-person conference.

WHY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IS ESSENTIAL

Engagement in professional learning is one of the responsibilities of faculty. As a key strategy to effect cultural change and institutional transformation, faculty professional learning must be designed to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural competency, diversity, and inclusion. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has taken a leadership role in professional learning on a statewide level; however, local academic senates must also be engaged, as professional learning is an academic and professional matter as defined in Title 5 §53200.

Sims, et. al. (2020) argue that faculty and college leaders must gain an understanding of "the call for civic consciousness and acts of genuine care with the intention of catalyzing change toward becoming a more equity-centered college through epistemological disruption and the reconstruction of educational structures and policies that negatively impact poor and ethno-racially minoritized students." This concept is known as the obligation gap. The authors argue that the responsibility for change should be placed on the educational institution instead of students. Professional development and learning must be centered

on providing opportunities for faculty to shape their praxis with the goal of achieving more equitable educational outcomes for all students. In order for faculty to address institutional change, they are obligated to reimagine or reshape curriculum and pedagogical practices.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion need to be at the heart of substantive faculty professional learning. To effectively change the course of opportunities provided to faculty, colleges must have a professional learning action plan built on an equity-minded[1] framework (CCCCO, 2020a). This process provides for equity-minded faculty equipped to engage in difficult conversations, training, and decision-making opportunities that lead to transformational change in student outcomes and achievements.

Faculty learning opportunities must integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racist pedagogy. Various pedagogies grounded in research have been identified as effective tools to build an equity-minded program; among them is training in the practice of culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogy to promote healing and reconciliation for disproportionately impacted students and students of color. In the 2020 paper *Anti-Racism Education in California Community College*s, the ASCCC asserts that "Key to the success of culturally responsive pedagogy is the collaboration between faculty and students to co-produce knowledge to ensure courses are culturally responsive and emphasize cultural wealth, are relevant to students' experiences and goals, are academically rigorous, and cultivate belonging and community among students and faculty" (ASCCC, 2020a, p.39).

The ASCCC is committed to addressing the professional learning of all faculty with intentionality and focusing on opportunities for diverse groups of faculty, including faculty of color, women, and special populations, to promote leader-

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1   "Equity-minded" refers to a schema that provides an alternative framework for understanding the causes of equity gaps in outcomes and the action needed to close them. Rather than attribute inequities in outcomes to student deficits, being equity-minded involves interpreting inequitable outcomes as a signal that practices are not working as intended. Inequities are eliminated through changes in institutional practices, policies, culture, and routines. Equity-mindedness encompasses being race conscious, institutionally focused, evidence based, systemically aware, and action oriented.

ship and professional learning. The organization's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan (ASCCC, 2018) contains six overarching goals. The second goal, "Engage and Empower Diverse Groups of Faculty at All Levels of State and Local Leadership," includes the objective to increase leadership development opportunities that prepare diverse faculty to participate in and lead local and statewide conversations. One way this professional learning is carried out is through ongoing training opportunities and mentorship, including the Faculty Empowerment and Leadership Academy (ASCCC, 2020c). Beyond these state-wide efforts, local college programs can aim to transform faculty into culturally responsive educators.

INTEGRATING DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION INTO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The ASCCC recognizes the national history of discriminatory laws and the history of racial diversification and equity efforts in the California Community Colleges system. This recognition informs diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism efforts. At the Fall 2020 ASCCC Plenary Session, the delegates adopted the paper titled *Anti-Racism Education in California Community Colleges: Acknowledging Historical Context and Assessing and Addressing Effective Anti-Racism Practice for Faculty Professional Development*. To address anti-racism, the authors point out the importance of becoming race-conscious as an integral part of any professional learning. Faculty should be provided opportunities to engage in learning to reflect on the concept of race, its benefits, and its consequences. A college's professional growth program can tailor this work by focusing on a four-part framework: researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, shifting from self to system, and understanding curriculum and instruction (ASCCC, 2020a, p.23-30).

Local academic senate leaders can collaborate with faculty and other stake-holders to create more intentional learning opportunities for faculty to critically assess their teaching practices and evaluate student learning and support. One method of examining equity, and of integrating diversity and inclusion, is by focusing on three dimensions:

1. Individual/Personal Dimension. Faculty practice self-awareness and equity-mindedness, making a commitment to equitable and culturally responsive educational practices. This process includes learning to recognize and eliminate personal biases that impact the student-teacher interaction.

2. Interactional/Professional Dimension. Faculty, administrators, and staff utilize equity-based practices to effectively support success for disproportionately impacted and minoritized students.

3. Institutional Dimension. College policies, processes, procedures, structures, and curricula actualize success for disproportionately impacted and minoritized groups.

Colleges committed to improving professional learning to advance diversity, equity and inclusion need to consider the following key elements:

- The examination of key structures in professional development and learning.
- The application of self-critique and guided self-reflection in all professional development and learning.
- The use of effective methodology for facilitating dialogue, including methods to build trust and integrate the voices of all faculty.
- The practice of affinity group separation in training to prevent taxing faculty of color.
- The college commitment to the ongoing integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion with the goal of improving outcomes in overall student success.

GOING BEYOND CONTENT EXPERTISE

California community college faculty, due to the requirements of minimum qualifications, come to the system as subject matter experts, through their degrees, their work experiences, or both. These qualifications are in contrast to the K-12 system that uses a credential approach designed to provide a strong pedagogy and curriculum framework and formal mentoring or coaching in a

classroom, yielding prepared and equipped teachers. While the minimum qualifications assure a level of expertise within the subject matter that is far beyond what is typically required within a credentialing system, more pedagogical training may need to be incorporated into the professional learning curriculum to achieve the equity and student success goals of the community college system. Considering the diverse populations of community colleges, faculty need ongoing training in culturally responsive teaching, teaching methodologies that are research-based, and ongoing professional learning conversations. Focusing on cultural and generational humility[2] and understanding how students learn and their learning modalities are key in evolving from passive lecture-based classrooms to interactive and engaging classrooms.

Professional learning for community college faculty should be intentionally designed to share promising practices and to provide new and experienced faculty with opportunities to understand how to implement curriculum that is relevant and culturally responsive as well as to understand how to utilize a wide variety of pedagogical techniques that center on how students learn. As professional learning is designed to include pedagogy and curriculum development, it can be framed in the three dimensions: individual, interactional, and institutional.

- **Individual** professional learning considerations can include activities to improve knowledge such as attending webinars and individually utilizing a variety of informational sources. Examples of such opportunities include the Online Network for Educators (@ONE) providing ongoing courses to help with quality online instruction and a variety of events and speakers that have been promoted through the California Community College Chancellor's Office, the Center for Urban Education, and others who have focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Interactional** activities can include conferences, college institutes, book reading groups, professional learning conversations, and other collaborations, including efforts to help faculty understand how to identify and

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2   Generational humility is learning to know students and colleagues with joyful curiosity and respect, seeking out intercultural interactions, viewing difference as a learning opportunity, and being aware of one's own ignorance.

design open education curriculum and how to implement an open pedagogy approach.

- **Institutional** professional learning can include Flex days, professional learning days, and ongoing analysis of curriculum and pedagogy at a college, including such efforts as a cultural audit of the course outlines of record.

These three dimensions are helpful in identifying and framing professional learning; however, considerations of and challenges to academic freedom should be kept in mind as each of these approaches is undertaken.

ACADEMIC SENATE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/ UNION COLLABORATION

Professional learning is one of many areas in which the interests and purviews of the academic senate and the faculty bargaining agent may overlap. Under Title 5 §53200 (c) (8), "policies for faculty professional development activities" fall under the heading of academic and professional matters and thus are subject to collegial consultation with the academic senate. However, this language specifically references "policies," not the details of professional learning activities nor faculty requirements for participation in professional learning. Rather, the specific obligations of faculty for professional learning participation and completion are frequently outlined in the faculty bargaining agreement, making such matters an issue for the faculty union. Issues involving the specific content of professional learning opportunities may touch on both policy and contract language as well as the more general interests of the district's professional learning program for all employees. A cooperative relationship between the faculty union and the academic senate, as well as connection to the broader professional learning program of the college, is necessary for developing a productive faculty professional learning program.

Ongoing dialogue between the academic senate and the faculty union can make both the development of or changes to policy and the negotiation of bargaining agreement language more collegial and effective. Before and during discus-

sions of policy development or modification regarding professional learning, academic senates should collaborate with their local union representatives to ensure that the policies or changes being considered do not conflict with contract language or raise issues regarding negotiated items. The academic senate can then work with the district to develop and enact policy with confidence that the interests of the bargaining agent are protected.

Likewise, because contract language may interact with policies for professional learning that fall under academic senate purview, the bargaining agent should collaborate with the academic senate before entering into negotiations regarding such issues and, to the degree possible, should continue to consult with the academic senate throughout the negotiations process. At the same time, academic senates must understand that some aspects of negotiations cannot be discussed outside of the bargaining team and that the bargaining unit may not always have the opportunity to consult with the academic senate before reaching an agreement at the negotiations table. For this reason, communication between the academic senate and the union prior to the beginning of negotiations is crucial so that the bargaining team can as fully as is possible and reasonable represent priorities that have been agreed upon in advance with the academic senate.

CONNECTING FACULTY EVALUATIONS TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

While faculty evaluations are an expected component of any educational institution, they can be a controversial issue in many districts. However, a robust and healthy evaluation process can benefit both the faculty and a college's instructional program by promoting personal growth in faculty members and by improving and enhancing approaches to teaching.

One way to develop an effective evaluation process is by connecting evaluations to professional learning. Such a process might be built in many ways. One approach could be to ensure that all evaluations include a set of personal goals or areas for improvement; even a person receiving the most positive evaluation

can still look for ways to improve. These goals might be developed by the individual faculty member being evaluated, suggested by the evaluation committee, or created jointly depending on the local process. Such goals could then be compiled from all evaluations in a given cycle, with any information that could identify the evaluee removed in order to protect privacy and enhance the evaluee's comfort level in suggesting areas for improvement, and then forwarded to the college's professional learning coordinator or committee. The professional learning program would then have data and guidance through which to develop activities for Flex days or other professional learning events that specifically address the interests and needs of the college community (ASCCC, 2013, p. 11).

This area is another in which the local academic senate and the collective bargaining agent can collaborate. Faculty evaluations are typically an issue that falls under the purview of the bargaining unit, and the process for evaluations is generally outlined in the bargaining agreement. However, if evaluations are seen not as a pro-forma, compliance, or punitive process but rather as an opportunity for individual improvement and growth, they also become integrated within the professional learning framework. Collective bargaining agents and academic senates would therefore need to work together to recommend a process that serves the interests of both bodies. Such consultation would necessarily take place before initiation of collective bargaining, and the academic senate would need to understand that the district also has an interest in this process and that the union therefore might need to reach compromises on aspects of the process during negotiations. Nevertheless, if all three constituencies—the academic senate, the bargaining agent, and the district administration—approach the issue with the intent of creating a non-threatening process that can enhance professional learning and personal growth for all faculty members, a productive and positive agreement could be reached that would connect the evaluations to the professional learning program.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PART-TIME FACULTY

Broad access to professional learning is critical for the health of an institution, and institutions should ensure access that reaches beyond full-time faculty to address the needs of their part-time colleagues. If structured well, professional

learning can provide opportunities to enrich and grow the professoriate via a nurturing pathway. The following is one recent example from a community college in central California: David Brooks was a community college student who returned to his local community college to teach as a part-time faculty member once he received his M.A. degree in art. He spent two years involved in a variety of professional learning opportunities that the college provided, such as a book series, a summer institute, @ONE courses for quality online instruction, and instructional rounds that involved informal visits to exemplary faculty classrooms followed by dialogue with colleagues. These opportunities helped him to grow as an educator, and when a full-time position became available at the college, the time invested into professional learning made him a strong candidate, enabling him to attain a full-time position.

Despite the chasm that is often experienced between full-time and part-time faculty, a community college cannot function without both. While full-time faculty have additional responsibilities regarding curriculum development, program development, and committee involvement, the primary functions of teaching and providing student support are not fundamentally different for full-time faculty members and part-time faculty members. All faculty are responsible for high-quality instruction and support, providing an equitable, engaging, and effective teaching and learning environment, and ultimately student success.

In Fall 2019, part-time faculty in the California Community College system taught 45% of all courses[3] (CCCCO, n.d.). Therefore, part-time faculty must have access to and be involved in professional learning opportunities provided by colleges, as offering substantive professional learning for them is essential to ensuring that students are not negatively impacted. Professional learning for part-time faculty can include involvement in Flex day or professional learning day opportunities, part-time faculty orientation, part-time faculty mentoring programs, involvement in discipline-specific meetings, access to on-campus

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3   Technically, this percentage refers to all temporary faculty. However. this population is so overwhelmingly composed of part-time faculty that, according to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, even if other temporary faculty were removed from the calculation, the percentage reported for part-time faculty would be unchanged.

summer institutes or other forms of on-campus professional learning, and inclusion in and consideration for off-campus workshops and conferences.

Part-time faculty experience various challenges in accessing equitable professional learning opportunities. First, many part-time faculty teach at multiple colleges or have other full-time jobs in other industry sectors, thus impacting their time and access at any single institution. Conversely, part-time faculty may receive obligations of duplicate training at multiple colleges, such as Canvas training on effective practices in online instruction or certification. This situation requires that each college be intentional about working with individual part-time faculty to customize professional learning opportunities that make sense for the individual's subject, experience, and background. An investment in part-time faculty professional learning is a statement of how the institution values part-time faculty and recognizes their impact on the classroom, support services, the college, and the California Community College system. Such investment enriches the applicant pool for full-time faculty positions by cultivating highly qualified part-time faculty with experience and quality training who are ready to engage from the first day in a full-time faculty role.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TO THE INSTITUTION

Faculty frequently play important roles and have responsibilities under state regulations in areas in which they may not be inherently knowledgeable or comfortable. Some expected elements of participatory governance, including strategic planning, budget, accreditation, and even program review, are not part of the typical academic preparation for faculty. Institutions would be well-served if such areas that are so important to the institutions' overall function were included in some of the professional learning offered. Additionally, the institution may benefit from faculty professional learning that results in increased success and retention, especially of disadvantaged and marginalized students, as well as more widespread compliance for supporting disabled students including accessibility of instructional and support material and even more access to funding under the Student Centered Funding Formula. For a

college to be effective in serving students and its community, the contribution of faculty is essential. If faculty are more adept in all areas as a result of ongoing professional learning, faculty may be more likely to volunteer and offer meaningful contributions. This result can only serve to strengthen institutions.

FACULTY ROLE IN STRUCTURING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In order for colleges to be eligible to receive funds for professional learning, the state requires the colleges to form an advisory committee comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff who assess professional learning needs and assist with the development of a local plan to meet those needs and to report on actual expenditures for faculty and staff professional learning from the preceding year (California Education Code §87151). While Education Code §§87151 and 87153 provide some guidance regarding the subject matter of acceptable professional learning activities and what campus entities must be involved in planning with respect to professional learning, broad discretion is given to individual colleges to define specific relevant policies, determine how much of a faculty member's time should be dedicated to professional learning, and develop procedures for approval of specific activities.

Many colleges and districts have adopted administrative procedures to explain their local professional learning processes, but in most instances these procedures lack the detail necessary for one to truly understand local practices with regard to professional learning. Some colleges use a fully or mostly faculty-driven model where a faculty coordinator is responsible for planning and implementing PL, while other institutions have created an administrative position to oversee faculty PL in consultation with the local academic senate. Academic senates should examine local policies along with administrators to determine whether the current policies and structures are clear and assist the college in meeting its goals. Local academic senates should make certain that the policies contain clear guidelines as to what constitutes an appropriate professional learning activity in order to guide the professional learning committee. This detail assures that the policies for professional learning remain

under senate purview while the operational component resides within the professional learning committee.

While local procedures regarding professional learning vary widely throughout the state, some commonalities do exist. As PL is an academic and professional matter, one model is for local academic senates to have faculty professional learning committees charged with assessing the needs of the college and designing, implementing, or overseeing programming for professional learning for faculty. Another model is to have a single committee overseeing professional learning for all staff, including classified professionals and managers. In the latter structure, the local academic senate should ensure that it maintains its purview over faculty professional learning policies and activities. This goal can be accomplished by having a faculty chair or co-chair of the overall committee, having significant faculty representation on the committee, or some other structure agreed upon by the administration and the local academic senate.

Because specific PL obligations are often a working condition, local contracts may dictate how many hours each faculty member must devote to these activities as a minimum each academic year, and some include more specific requirements around particular types of professional learning such as department- or division-specific events or activities related to equity and diversity. While some colleges require individual faculty members to complete a personal PL plan and devote a certain number of hours to participating in one or more campus-wide Flex days organized around a particular theme each semester, the focus of other PL activities may be at the individual faculty member's discretion. Ideally, faculty members regularly evaluate their own strengths and growth areas as educators and engage in PL activities that address areas where growth is needed; however, most college policies and procedures do not require this level of planning, and thus the responsibility for addressing one's observed or perceived PL needs usually falls on the individual faculty member, with wide variation in willingness to create and follow through with a meaningful individual professional learning plan.

FUNDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

While the original draft of AB 1725 (Vasconcellos, 1988) had a 2% budget earmark for professional development funding, this allotment was trimmed to 0.25% in the version of the legislation that was enacted. Over time, even this miniscule amount of funding has been trimmed or, in some cases, completely eliminated due to the uncertainty of the state budget in difficult economic times and the apparent reluctance of the state to provide a budgetary structure that prioritizes higher education and specifically the need for robust professional learning opportunities for faculty.

The legislature has provided various one-time funds for professional learning, which is useful, but more funding is needed to fully address the systemic changes desired by the legislature and communities around the state. In 2013, a special Student Success Initiative Professional Development Committee established by the Chancellor's Office recommended that "½ of 1% of the CCC System budget be set aside specifically for professional development activities" (CCCCO, 2013), but this recommendation was never enacted. In 2014, AB 2558 (Williams) established guidelines for professional learning and procedures colleges are required to follow in order to obtain funds from the state, but this legislation once again failed to specify a stable funding source for PL. Thus, many colleges currently finance PL from a variety of sources including restricted and unrestricted general funds, categorical funds such as guided pathways and Student Equity and Achievement, outside funding sources such as grants to the college or to particular programs within the college, and, for certain activities such as training for hiring committees, EEO funds. This piecemeal strategy for funding is not a sustainable long-term solution. If colleges are expected to adequately equip faculty for the rigors of educating students in the immensely diverse California Community Colleges system, the state must invest in the future by identifying and committing to a stable, long-term PL funding source.

In the absence of earmarked funding from the state, funding for professional learning should be integrated into the governance and budget of each college and district. Through program review, resource allocation, gover-

nance committees, and data analysis and outcomes, colleges and districts should identify and prioritize local professional learning needs. Faculty professional learning is crucial for student success, as community college students spend the majority of their time working directly with faculty in a classroom or through support services and counseling.

Once professional learning needs have been identified, general fund allocations should be utilized to provide individual, interactional, and institutional professional learning opportunities for all faculty. In the absence of direct funding from allocated general fund dollars, a plethora of other funding sources can be utilized for professional learning, including funds from Student Equity and Achievement, guided pathways, categorical programs, and other state and federal grants. Colleges should consider writing professional learning into any federal or state grants that they seek and encourage categorical programs to include PL in their annual plans and reports. Another avenue for generating funds for professional learning is to engage community, industry, and corporate partners through collaborative efforts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULAR REDESIGN

Student equity cannot be separated from the role of professional learning provided to faculty, both in terms of instruction and support services. Guidance from the ASCCC regarding the importance of faculty primacy in professional learning and the allocation of dollars spent on a college campus requires a deeper look at institutional training needs. The ASCCC's July 2020 *Senate Rostrum* provided individual and personal faculty stories of racism and inequities in the community college system, illustrating that much work still remains to be done to make the community college system more equitable for faculty and students. While the California community college student population has changed over the decades, with the majority of students being individuals of color and particularly Latinx students, faculty ethnic identity remains stagnant and mostly white. To assure that all students are given the best opportunity for success, faculty must be trained to create an environment where students can thrive.

The ASCCC and system partners recognize and embrace the need for systemic change. During the Fall 2019 ASCCC Plenary Session, for example, several resolutions on diversity, equity and inclusion were passed, including 3.02 F19, 3.03 F19 and 3.04 F19.[4] During the summer of 2020, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office issued a call to action (CCCCO, 2020b), and a concomitant call to action was issued from ASCCC President John Stanskas (2020) encouraging senate leaders to "prioritize culturally responsive curricular redesign" and engage in discussion of anti-racism and no-hate education. This request has prompted colleges and academic senates across the state to re-examine their institutions through an equity lens. Participatory governance committees have revised their committee charges and responsibilities to be inclusive and responsive to the changing cultural climate on college campuses. The Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) published *Anti-Racism: A Student Plan of Action* (SSCCC, 2020), which makes two strong statements: Colleges should "Require onboarding and annual faculty training on cultural competency, conflict resolution, unconscious bias, microaggressions, workplace diversity and other racial barriers" and "Ensure that the community college curriculum is responsive to all cultures in an effort to foster cultural appreciation, awareness, acceptance, and value." Both Cruz (2019) and Ahadi and Guerrero (2020) emphasize the importance of developing an inclusive syllabus structure that humanizes the student, particularly students of color, and urge institutions to examine their course outlines of record in an attempt to expose institutional racism and break down barriers for students. Both recognize the urgency of this matter and suggest thorough analysis of learning environments.

While the concept of creating culturally responsive curricular redesign is not new given the historical paradigm of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000), it has lacked widespread adoption throughout academia. Although elements may be seen in some social science and multicultural courses, the ethnic studies curriculum was specifically designed to address the deficiencies found in the majority of undergraduate courses. Organizations like the Center for Urban Education

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4   ASCCC Resolutions can be found at https://asccc.org/resources/resolutions

(CUE), featuring its Syllabus Review Guide (Roberts & CUE, n.d.) and webinar series (CUE, 2020) on racial equity including the research offered by the Community College Equity Assessment Lab, provide evidence and trainings that substantiate the need for racially conscious curriculum. Other prominent organizations like the National Center on Race and Ethnicity have been fostering inclusivity for several decades, coupled with the research provided by the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges justifying needed changes to the curriculum and the American Educational Research Association's long standing research from a national perspective. California's community colleges should now embrace this re-design systemically and provide robust professional learning for faculty to facilitate this update.

INCORPORATING DATA PROFICIENCY IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Data analysis has increasingly become a component of colleges' decision-making processes, thanks in part to the integration of the guided pathways framework into college structures. As institutions collect more data, faculty must become more proficient at using and navigating this information. Faculty leaders can examine college and district level data to help inform decisions on which policies are effective and which create an opportunity gap for some students and can advocate for changes as appropriate. Such data includes success and completion rates, transfer, or other measures that indicate whether students are achieving their educational goals. However, faculty in many disciplines may not be fully trained in or comfortable with data analysis. For this reason, training faculty in the understanding and use of data is an important and useful component of professional learning in modern education.

Some colleges have begun to invest in data coaching. In this practice, someone, usually a faculty member proficient in accessing and analyzing data, trains other faculty in the practical application of data. This practice, coupled with professional learning for faculty to understand what data is available and how to apply it, can become an invaluable tool in helping to analyze local student populations and how best to serve them. Among other applications, data can be

used to show areas where a disproportionate impact exists. Faculty must carefully examine these areas as plans are made in order to reduce and eliminate the disproportionate impact on certain groups of students, including those who have traditionally been marginalized. Data proficiency can also be useful for college planning, curriculum development, and many other aspects of college governance.

The ASCCC offers tools that can be used in training faculty in data usage, including college data from statewide sources such as the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Data Mart portal. For example, at the program level, faculty can examine data to find potential opportunity gaps that may be affected by scheduling, outreach, prerequisite determinations, or other considerations. At the course level, data can be used to examine the effect of curricular changes such as increased cultural responsiveness on students, especially students who have been traditionally marginalized. Faculty need to be familiar and comfortable with analyzing and interpreting data of various kinds in order to achieve these purposes. Thus, integrating data proficiency into professional learning can benefit faculty, institutions, and students by making faculty better able to participate effectively in decision-making processes that are based on data analysis.

PROVIDING GROWTH AND MENTORSHIP FOR NEWER FACULTY

Most colleges recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining tenure track faculty and therefore have created routine onboarding programs for newly hired faculty (ASCCC, 2017). Programs span from a few hours to one semester to two years. Topics typically included in these programs are navigating the college environment, understanding policies and procedures, course evaluation and assessment, and teaching techniques. California community colleges should also include training on the role of faculty in the college and district governance processes as provided for in Education Code, Title 5, and local policies and regulations, as new faculty typically have little experience with this complex and important structure.

Beyond these topics, some colleges offer new programs, sometimes called Faculty Equity or Development Academies, that take a cohort approach to training new faculty that emphasizes an understanding of the diverse student populations served and how to ensure student success. Examining the many possibilities as to why inequalities exist in student success data can help shape a well-defined new faculty orientation process and help to transform the classroom environment. A few elements to consider for this training model might include decolonizing the syllabus, how to interpret student equity data, and understanding diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Every model should ensure that faculty can self-reflect on their training and learning around competency-based anti-racism, equity, and inclusion.

In an article published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Ana M. Martínez-Alemán (2016) states that a faculty development for educational equity program must include three key components: "To help faculty develop academic identities anchored to the principles of equity-mindedness, an FDP should involve three components: (1) release time for faculty, (2) monetary rewards for equity-minded teaching, and (3) recognition of equity-minded teaching in promotion and tenure appraisals." Although faculty compensation falls outside of the purview of academic senates, partnering with the local collective bargaining unit can assure that the goals of professional learning are met.

Colleges are being urged to increase the diversity of their faculty populations so that they are reflective of the student populations that they serve, since growing research studies have shown that teacher expectations of students of color are different when students are taught by a teacher of the same ethnicity (Gershenson, et. al, 2015). Another key benefit is the impact on professional learning. With a more diverse faculty, opportunities for culturally responsive pedagogy are increased as the professoriate gains skills as a whole. The importance of hiring and maintaining a diverse faculty was clearly outlined in the *Senate Rostrum* article "Our Obligation to Equitable Hiring Practices: A Partnership Approach to Ensuring and Equity-minded Selection and Recommendation Process" (Taylor-Mendoza & Bean, 2020), which urged college administrators to invest in faculty of color. However, much less attention and fewer resources are typically invested in cultivating an environment that

supports the retention of faculty of color. Colleges should provide professional learning that can increase the success and retention of newly hired faculty, especially faculty of color.

Developing a formal or informal mentoring program can be an important component of professional learning. College campuses are not immune to hostile work environments, intentional or not; however, creating a safe, nurturing, and supportive atmosphere could make the difference as to whether a faculty member stays at or leaves a college. Mentoring programs need to be intentional, purposeful, and authentic. A mentoring program should be funded appropriately to include resources needed to reduce faculty load for full and complete participation. Time should be taken to assess the needs of the faculty cohort so that the appropriate matching can take place. The ASCCC has taken the lead in this area by creating a new Faculty Empowerment and Leadership Academy that provides one-on-one mentoring to diverse faculty (ASCCC, 2020c). Mentorship provides an opportunity to grow leadership from within and seek out those who have leadership potential.

Professional learning is as key to retaining faculty as it is to improving skills of the faculty as a whole. Building a professional learning module for mid- and early-career faculty mentorship allows the college to nurture tenure-track faculty, which supports the retention of faculty of color while also fostering an equity-minded instructional leadership training embedded within that retention strategy.

Professional learning events provide faculty the opportunity to network and gain useful knowledge, guidance, and advice from peers and colleagues within and across higher education systems. Affinity group networking similar to the ASCCC caucuses (ASCCC, n.d.) allows for safe conversation and thought development within a common group of members. Networking can be beneficial to career mobility and sustainability.

SABBATICALS

A sabbatical leave is not just a vacation or time for faculty to rest. In most districts, a faculty member who takes a sabbatical is expected to complete a project that is of some benefit to the college or to the faculty member personally. At their root, sabbaticals are intended as a form of professional learning, a chance to take time to develop one's knowledge or skills. If used appropriately, they can be an important part of a strong professional learning program.

Because sabbaticals are connected to professional learning, they fall in part under the purview of the academic senate. However, the conditions and requirements for a sabbatical leave are normally negotiated into the faculty bargaining agreement. Both academic senates and faculty unions therefore have roles in the establishment and granting of sabbaticals. The senate and the union should consult to determine the conditions and parameters for sabbaticals that the senate would like to see negotiated into the contract. Such issues might include the conditions that faculty must meet in order to take a sabbatical and the number of leaves to be granted in any given year, which are contract matters on which the union would normally have the primary voice. Once such parameters are established and negotiated, the academic senate should lead on the professional learning policy aspects of sabbaticals, such as what the requirements for a project would be, how proposals for such projects would be reviewed and authorized, and how the completed final projects would be approved. Because both the academic senate and the faculty union have direct connections to the granting and completion of sabbaticals, the two organizations must work together to ensure appropriate agreements regarding both contract issues and professional learning quality control.

Education Code and Title 5 contain no language concerning the granting of sabbaticals, and thus sabbatical leaves are not an opportunity to which faculty have an inherent right. The conditions and number of sabbaticals, and ultimately whether sabbaticals will be granted at all, are ultimately a matter at the discretion of the local governing board. However, if a district is committed to a meaningful professional learning program, the local board should be willing to entertain reasonable sabbatical leave agreements and policies depending on

appropriate allowances for fiscal and staffing concerns. Academic senates and faculty unions can work together alongside representatives of district administration to develop such processes and policies that will strengthen their professional learning programs.

RESPONSIVENESS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Environmental and global factors affecting education on a large scale have made evident the need for colleges to become more nimble in their ability to serve students in the face of unexpected events. California has experienced unforeseen closures due to natural disasters such as the devastation caused by fires as well as a global pandemic that forced all colleges into an online environment. In an unprecedented turn of events that impacted all aspects of society, the entirety of the California Community Colleges system was forced to turn on the proverbial dime to redirect all teaching and student support services to 100% online in less than two weeks. Although the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office provided some support, the impact on teaching and learning as well as student support services was enormous, and the effects may continue to be seen for many years to come, even as the rest of society returns to a sense of normalcy. The lessons from the fires and the COVID-19 epidemic are still being assessed, but one thing is clear: local academic senates must ensure that even emergency professional learning is guided by the academic senate to ensure quality teaching and learning throughout the institution.

Certain strategies and approaches helped colleges rise to the challenge of providing quality emergency professional learning quickly and in a unified manner. One such example comes from the San Mateo County Community College District. Comprised of three colleges, the district convened a team under its district academic senate, a group entitled the Taskforce on Teaching and Learning. This team included faculty from all campuses ranging from distance education specialists to counselors to career tech and general education faculty representatives; it included administrators and students as well. The team issued critical guidance in a district voice that helped colleges respond to the demands they were facing. Likewise, Cosumnes River College created a digital equity workgroup including faculty and administrative representatives

working closely with IT staff; through this group, the college was able to provide guidance to not only assist faculty teaching remotely but also clarify distribution of laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and other technological supports. The guidance was the beginning of a re-envisioning of teaching and learning that would develop statewide.

Such quick and nimble action requires a solid foundation in delivery of quality professional learning at the time it is needed. As inequities in professional learning are laid bare in an emergency, especially in areas of distance learning, this hindsight shows what professional learning needs to encompass even in normal times. Some issues raised during an ASCCC workshop reflection on responses to the pandemic include the following:

- Barriers to quickly certifying faculty to teach online. Colleges reported untenable, inaccessible, or unnecessarily onerous requirements in training for online teaching.
- Inconsistent and inequitable access for full-time versus part-time faculty to training in use of course management systems and course shells.
- Lack of communication and collaboration between faculty and administration, the existence of which could have facilitated the shift better.
- Lack of consultation with faculty on the most accessible and relevant tools that support online teaching and learning.
- Disconnect from campus equity-minded efforts as colleges rapidly attempted to address needs that, ultimately, impacted minoritized students more greatly.
- Underestimating the level of support needed for faculty to pivot their teaching to online.

Additional resources that can support faculty in an emergency situation can include the following:

- Supportive, creative guidance to help faculty evaluate for outcomes in a course for which the term is cut short by an emergency.
- Development in equitable concepts of grading that are less punitive for students affected by an emergency.

- Guidance in work-life balance to support faculty overwhelmed by the emergency situation.

No college can truly prepare for the unforeseeable, but an equitable approach to the provision and delivery of professional learning, paired with robust communication and collaborative operations, can yield better responses.

CONCLUSION

Faculty professional learning, previously referred to as professional development, has long been recognized as a necessary aspect of the professional responsibility of faculty. A compelling body of evidence indicates that the emphasis of such learning needs to be directed toward ways to improve student learning and student support services. Given the persistent opportunity gaps for students of color and other minoritized groups, more emphasis should be placed on professional learning that addresses diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism and other practices to alleviate this gap.

Given that culturally responsive practices, curricular design, and pedagogy are not typically part of the academic preparation that faculty receive, all institutions within the California Community Colleges system should provide expansive professional learning opportunities to address this need. Such efforts will improve the overall experience as well as the success and retention of all students, regardless of race or ethnicity. While equity-focused professional learning should not be offered to the exclusion of all other topics, providing training that is equity-focused will inherently alter the lens through which other professional learning may be viewed.

Faculty professional learning should ultimately be focused on improving teaching, learning, and student support services. Moreover, as colleges are transformed through broad efforts such as integration of guided pathways frameworks, streamlined transfer pathways, online education, and other initiatives, having faculty that are versed in diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism will ensure that these principles are integrated throughout the college structure.

While colleges may be able to simply adjust some of their professional learning options, sustained substantive change may require a restructuring of policies for professional learning, reimagining the types of professional learning supported, and broadening their availability, including more robust new faculty orientation programs and more opportunities for part-time faculty. These changes may also require a reassessment as to how professional learning funds

are allocated as well as a renewed commitment system-wide to fund professional learning more aggressively. As the California Community Colleges system is focused on increasing student success and completion, faculty professional learning must be seen as essential to achieving those goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Individual Faculty

- Reflect on interactions with students and seek professional learning opportunities that can help improve teaching, student learning, and student support as appropriate.

Recommendations to Professional Learning Coordinators

- Reevaluate professional learning programs to prioritize activities that focus on improving student learning.

Recommendations to Local Academic Senates

- Adopt a racial equity focus in professional learning.
- Examine professional learning activities to increase equity-minded professional learning.
- Examine and further develop professional growth programming focused on ways to improve student learning.

Recommendations to Colleges and Districts

- Identify and examine the hours of professional learning that focus on equity and equity mindedness.
- Use faculty evaluations as a tool for determining professional learning activities.

Recommendations to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors

- Prioritize faculty professional learning as a critical tool for improving student success and retention.
- Integrate faculty professional learning into ongoing diversity equity and inclusion work.
- Establish a dedicated funding stream so that districts can provide consistent and reliable professional learning opportunities.

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